

To: Montana Legislative Education Appropriations Subcommittee

Representative Jack Wells	- Chair
Representative Eve Franklin	- Vice Chair
Representative Bill Glaser	- Vice Chair
Senator Bob Hawks	
Senator Dave Wanzenried	
Senator Dave Lewis	

From: Nancy Meuli , MEAC (Montana Extension Advisory Council) Chair

Date: January 23, 2007

RE: Budget for MSU Extension Service

Dear Legislators,

As you sort through the various funding requests in an effort to wisely allocate the funds available I thank you for considering these comments regarding the MSU Extension Service and their concerted efforts in the area of community development.

This long-established network of professionals is already set up in every county of Montana, which alleviates the need to re-invent the wheel with regards to constructing an organization by which to encourage and assist in community development projects. These MSU Extension Service agents are well-trained professionals that can and do bring a wealth of information and skills to the various community development projects that they are involved in. Many involve creative collaboration efforts that revitalize major portions of communities.

For instance:

- In Anaconda, in 2006, 1000 new trees were budding in response to surveys conducted through an MSU Extension community visioning process. Over a number of years MSU extension has collaborated with MSU's College of Arts and Architecture and an average of 250 local community members to form the very successful, Anaconda Street Tree Committee. These folks worked together to address an identified barrier to community growth and changed the visual impression of Anaconda from a "nothing grows here" impression to "this is a healthy and inviting community." First impressions matter in economic development and the MSU Extension Service was there to help Anaconda help itself in this instance.
 - (For more information on this economic development project please look at Page 7 of the MSU Extension Service Annual Report.)
- With impetus from the Extension-driven process to assess and develop shared community goals, Harlowton has constructed a rail trail that connects the city's Chief Joseph Park to the town's historic Milwaukee rail depot.
- The Valley County MSU Extension teamed with the Glasgow Chamber of commerce, Fish Wildlife & Parks and BLM to bring bird watchers to Glasgow. This laid the foundation for Glasgow hosting the Montana State Audubon

Meeting / Bird Festival in 2006, which translated into a \$32,000 infusion into the local economy.

- MSU Extension and the Prairie County Economic Development council teamed on projects to revitalize economy and build infrastructure in Prairie County. This team was the impetus that launched the premiere of a PBS Documentary on Evelyn Cemeran, a turn-of-the-century photographer who lived in and photographed Prairie County.
- In Dawson County, MSU Extension was instrumental in providing education on computer and technology skills that have enhanced current businesses and helped folks start up other businesses.
- There are many other projects in the works some of which are highlighted on pages 7 & 8 of the MSU Extension Service Annual Report.

These exciting developments in local economies are made possible in part, because the local MSU Extension agent is an established member of the community with cares and concerns the same as others in the community. Because this is where they are personally putting down roots and have raised or are raising their own families they have a vested interest in the well being of the economics of the community. Besides being genuinely concerned about the community they also have access to a myriad of resources through their connection with Montana State University. In fact, they are already intricately networked with not only a state-wide network but with a nation-wide network. These individuals have direct and indirect access to the entire land-grant university system in the United States.

The establishment of the Extension Service through the states' land grant universities in the late 1800s has created a stable and well-defined infrastructure that can be used throughout the nation and Montana for a variety of professional development and information dissemination needs.

Montana is fortunate to have such knowledgeable, concerned and caring people in these strategic positions within our counties and communities.

As a legislator you can trust that the money you invest in the MSU Extension service will be put to use for Montanans. It will not be squandered reinventing the wheel but will hit the ground running to make a difference in your own communities.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these remarks.

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